

## **ABSTRACT**

**RESEARCH PAPER:** Assessment of Impoverished Individuals

**STUDENT:** Eric R. Weaver

**DEGREE:** Master of Arts

**COLLEGE:** Sciences and Humanities

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The current study was undertaken to investigate the judgments that individuals make about impoverished persons at varying levels of poverty and how beliefs about the availability of opportunity affected those judgments. College students rated the extent to which opportunity was available in America, read vignettes describing people living in varying states of poverty, and judged to what extent those people were to blame for their poverty. Participants who rated opportunity as more available judged the impoverished persons as more to blame for their poverty than did participants who rated opportunity as less available. Vignette characters in extreme poverty were blamed more for their poverty than vignette characters in mild poverty were for their poverty. The results have implications for understanding attitudes towards the impoverished and public policy relating to poverty.